

1. PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION FORM

Applicant (agency & address – including zip)		Proposed Date of Completion: November 2012	
Check one		Grant Amount Requested: \$251,345	
City of Merced 678 W. 18 th Street Merced, CA 95340	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City	If Joint Proposal, list participating entities/contact person: N/A	
	<input type="checkbox"/> County		
	<input type="checkbox"/> MPO		
	<input type="checkbox"/> COG		
	<input type="checkbox"/> RTPA		
	<input type="checkbox"/> JPA		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Joint Proposal		
Lead Applicant's Name: City of Merced			
Title of Proposal (summarize the deliverable to be funded by this grant): Bellevue Corridor Community Plan			
Applicant's Representative Authorized in Resolution:		Person with Day to Day Responsibility for Plan (if different from Authorized Representative):	
Name: John M. Bramble Title: City Manager Phone: (209) 385-6834 Email: bramblej@cityofmerced.org		Name: William R. King, AICP Title: Principal Planner Phone: (209) 385-6858 Email: kingb@cityofmerced.org	
Check all of the following that are incorporated or applicable to the proposal:			
Focus Area		Program Objectives	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus Area #1		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Applying for 20% EDC set aside	
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Area #2			
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Area #3		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improve air and water quality	
Eligibility Requirements (mandatory)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote Public Health	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consistent with State Planning Priorities		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote equity	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduces GHG emissions on a permanent basis		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase affordable housing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration requirement		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase infill and compact development	
Priority Considerations		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revitalize urban and community centers	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates collaboration and community involvement		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protect natural resources and agricultural lands	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Addresses climate change impacts		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduce automobile usage and fuel consumption	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Serves as best practices		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Improve infrastructure systems	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leverages additional resources		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote water conservation	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Serves an economically disadvantaged community		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Promote energy efficiency and conservation	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Serves a severely disadvantaged community		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strengthen the economy	
I certify that the information contained in this plan application, including the required attachments, is complete and accurate.			
Signature: <u>John M. Bramble</u>		Date: <u>08-19-10</u>	
Print Name and Title: John M. Bramble, City Manager			

2. PROPOSAL SUMMARY STATEMENT

The City of Merced (pop. 80,000) lies in Merced County, in the San Joaquin Valley. Within the City's Sphere of Influence is the Bellevue Corridor, a three square mile area situated between the City of Merced and the new University of California Merced campus. (Please see Bellevue Corridor Map, p. 25.)

The City is now seeking funding to create the Bellevue Corridor Community Plan (BCCP). The BCCP will communicate the vision for the Bellevue Corridor as a compact, transit-oriented "Urban Village." The project will also identify potential barriers to implementation and present tools to overcome them. To date the City has committed over \$119,000 toward the BCCP. Approximately \$251,000 additional grant dollars are needed for the plan's completion.

UC Merced is now a community of 3,500 people. By 2020, the university's population will increase tenfold to 35,000. Meanwhile, Merced's birthrate contributes to population growth at nearly twice the State's average rate. The area is "severely economically disadvantaged," and suffers from many public health issues. It is not a question whether a plan is needed, but rather a question of when and how.

By targeting the Bellevue Corridor for Urban Village design, the City will invest in an underutilized area by building on its basic infrastructure (including roads, water and sewer). This will preserve the outlying area's more environmentally valuable sites, such as local wetlands and nearby, high-production agricultural land. Compact design will confine the growing population to a small but vibrant mixed-use area west of the UC, filling in a gap between the City and UC Merced rather than sprawling into the more pristine wildlife habitats and agricultural lands east of campus.

The Plan will include "complete street" policies to provide greater choices in mobility for people who are economically, socially or physically disadvantaged. A second key deliverable is the establishment of prescriptive right-of-way cross sections and design templates for streets and adjacent public and semi-public spaces based on "complete street" policies and the City's "Urban Village Design Guidelines." The third element of the effort will convert the City's urban design guidelines (which are based on Peter Calthorpe's vision of Transit Oriented Development) to zoning code. These code provisions would ensure a quality built environment in areas where housing and commercial uses are in close proximity – namely in the City's "Urban Village" land use designation. Such code would also apply to all urban villages included in the City's General Plan Update. In concert with the above actions, the fourth tool, a "Transit Priority Project" (TPP) Assessment, aims to reduce vehicle trips (and therefore GHG emissions) consistent with the direction provided by SB 375. Trip reductions can be achieved in part by deployment of Caltrans' policy-based strategy called "Location Efficiency." Combined, these strategies form a crucial part of the City's approach to climate change impacts.

The City of Merced is a "Smart Growth" leader in the Central Valley as evidenced by inclusion of "mixed-use urban villages" in its 1997 General Plan, and also by contributing the highest residential density to the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint. The City now wishes to raise the planning bar again by developing a prototypical plan for future development defined by compact mixed use development near jobs and transit, and one that incorporates many implementing strategies of AB 32. This Plan would be posted online and distributed to planning agencies throughout the Central Valley.

Collaborating with the City are partners Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) and University of California – Merced (UCM). MCAG would advise the City in regard to State and Regional regulations concerning transportation, sustainability, air and water quality, housing affordability and a host of other regional issues. Meanwhile, UCM would lend the City its expertise as a cutting-edge leader in sustainable growth, while ensuring the Bellevue Corridor meshes well with the look and feel of this modern UC campus. Dozens of other local stakeholders will also take part in the process.

3. PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Step 1: Threshold Requirements

1. Describe how the Proposal is consistent with the State's Planning Priorities, Section 65041.1 of the Government Code:

a. Promote infill development and invest in existing communities;

The Bellevue Corridor Community Plan will present a strategy for the development of an area between the City of Merced and the newly established University of California-Merced. The project will serve to fill in three square miles of underutilized space between two developed areas. While not promoting traditional infill development, it will serve to urbanize underused land, linking the two developed areas.

b. Protect, preserve and enhance environmental and agricultural lands, and natural and recreational resources;

UC Merced is now a community of 3,500 people. The corridor would be enhanced to support a university with a future population of 35,000 students, faculty and staff. Mixed-use, transit-oriented development would include a variety of housing options, parks, businesses and amenities to serve a diverse population.

By targeting the Bellevue Corridor for mixed land use, the City will invest in an underdeveloped area with basic infrastructure. This will preserve the outlying area's more environmentally valuable sites, such as local wetlands and nearby, high-production agricultural land. Compact design will confine this burgeoning population to a small but vibrant area west of the UC, filling in a gap between the City and UC Merced rather than sprawling into the more pristine wildlife habitats and ag lands east of campus.

Concentrated land uses will minimize impacts on natural environmental resources, agricultural uses, and the need for automobile use by promoting pedestrian activity and public transit. Providing guidelines for the orientation of buildings and public spaces will minimize climatic impacts and promote the use of sustainable energy systems.

In regard to recreation, this project will introduce recreational resources into the area, outlining plans for public parks, off-street bicycle paths and open spaces. At this time, the Bellevue Corridor does not offer any publicly accessible park space.

c. Encourage location and resource efficient development.

The Bellevue Corridor Community Plan will outline development standards for an area with established resources such as water lines and sewer service. Public schools lie immediately adjacent to the area. Development of the Bellevue Corridor would be a logical extension of the urban fabric.

The BCCP will improve underutilized land by allowing for mixed-use zoning and higher density residential areas. Valuable resources such as storm water runoff and recycled water will be managed in a way to minimize the public investment in expensive water conveyance facilities. The Plan will outline proper orientation of structures with regard to solar utilization, and establish a transportation system that allows safe and efficient travel by a variety of modes of transportation.

2. Describe how the Proposal will (and include in work plan) reduce, on as permanent a basis that is feasible, greenhouse gas emissions consistent with:

a. California's Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006

i. How will the Proposal reduce greenhouse gas emissions as compared with business as usual through 2020 and beyond?

In regard to GHGs, the three square miles addressed in the BCCP will be most affected by transportation and electricity generation. The City will address these issues by indicating how emission reductions will be achieved via other transportation systems, building techniques, mixed-use development and a jobs-housing balance.

The Air Resources Board has tentatively set the San Joaquin Valley's GHG reduction goals for automobiles and light weight trucks at 5% by 2020 and 10% by 2035 (per drafted guidelines published August 2010). The BCCP will help the region meet these goals by dictating "complete streets" standards and modern, compact "urban village" design, resulting in a walkable community. The BCCP will establish these standards as zoning code.

The Plan will also feature solar design guidelines and other standards for energy efficiency.

ii. Identify the indicators that will be used to measure whether the Proposal will meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets or requirements?

The best indicator of regional GHG emission reductions will be traffic count data, which will be available through Merced County Association of Governments, allowing the City to monitor its success in creating a walkable community. Other indicators will be above-average bicycle and transit use.

b. Any applicable regional plan.

The BCCP will reduce GHGs by adopting or improving upon strategies outlined in the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Plan as well as the Regional Transportation Plan. Like these regional plans, the BCCP will outline strategies to avoid, minimize or mitigate the direct impacts that could contribute to the cumulative effects of GHGs.

By coordinating transportation and land use planning, the City will not only conform to *current* regional plans, but also serve as a pilot for *future* regional plans. As the City develops the BCCP, Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) will begin work on a regional Sustainable Communities Plan (due in 2014). Both plans will conform to SB 375 and follow traditional "smart growth" strategies. Since the BCCP is slated for development concurrently, it will serve to shape many of the concepts MCAG will discuss in the regional plan.

3. Meet the Collaboration Requirements of the focus area applicable to the Proposal (See Section II).

a. See Section III, Focusing Funds, for the Collaboration Requirements applicable to the Proposal.

The BCCP will be a coordinated effort, relying on the input of a diverse group of planning experts and community stakeholders. Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) is pleased to participate in the development of the BCCP. As the MPO, MCAG creates the area's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy. MCAG also serves as the lead entity in the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Project. Please see MCAG's letter of support (page 21), verifying their coordination with the project.

Step 2: Program Objectives

This project is not so much about a place as it is about the creation of a collaboratively constructed plan that seeks to resolve problems that occur throughout the community. Merced is one of the most socially and economically challenged cities in California, and is considered “severely economically disadvantaged” per SGC guidelines.

By establishing sustainable development strategies as code, the City will improve the quality of life for this vulnerable population. A community plan that incorporates sustainability concepts will greatly reduce the problems that typically haunt Central Valley communities, including poverty, pollution, water scarcity, social inequity and widespread asthma and obesity.

The path toward a sustainable community will require different social attitudes, long-term thinking and input from a diverse group of experts. To remove behavioral, economic and structural barriers, the City will work with a wide range of community groups, landowners, developers and government agencies to prioritize issues, establish standards and demonstrate the advantages of sustainability to the public.

This project will meet, in varying degrees, the following twelve objectives of the Strategic Growth Council’s Sustainable Communities Planning Grant and Incentives Program:

1. Improve Air and Water Quality

Air Quality

A recent survey by the Public Policy Institute reported that 70% of Valley residents consider air quality *the* primary quality of life issue. According to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (“Valley Air District”), our climate and geography create optimal conditions for generating and trapping air pollution.

One of the main contributors to our air pollution is automobile emissions. At the last U.S. Census, 73% of employed Merced residents commuted by single-occupant vehicle, with the average commute 22 minutes each way. Mixed-use zoning, with a strategic blend of housing and business opportunities, will reduce the need for long commutes. If planned well, the Bellevue Corridor will become a thoroughly walkable community, offering housing, services, recreation and shopping options within walking distance of each other. “Complete Streets” design concepts will accommodate – and, just as importantly, attract – pedestrians and bicyclists. Public transportation options and off-street bike paths will contribute to the area’s layout. *This strategy is considered the critical “first step” to solving the Valley’s air pollution problem, according to the Valley Air District.*

Traffic counts by Merced County Association of Governments will be the most accurate indicator for measuring the City’s success. Low numbers of vehicles will indicate that the City’s goals of reducing auto emissions are being achieved. In addition, the City will evaluate bike path usage and public transit use.

The project will be consistent with the State Implementation Plan as specified Valley Air District. City staff, along with representatives from Valley Air District and Merced County Association of Governments, will examine information regarding recent and historical SIP activity for PM2.5, PM10, ozone, and carbon monoxide in the San Joaquin Valley. Experts will compile data and review regulations to ensure the BCCP complies with Valley Air District air quality management plans.

Water Quality

The City will use the BCCP as an opportunity to address problems with Merced’s increasing urban water demands. To maximize water quality for the Bellevue Corridor, committees will address topics such as sewer service, solid waste disposal, storm water drainage and water facilities.

The City's Water Systems Department will test groundwater for natural and man-made pollutants. Data gathered from the City's bacteriological tests will reveal water quality in the area's wells, with coliform-negative tests serving as indicators to the BCCP's success in preventing water contamination.

The Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (MIRWMP) was prepared by The Merced Area Groundwater Pool Interest (MAGPI). The City of Merced serves on the MAGPI board, having statutory authority over water supply and management. City Staff will ensure that water quality standards and goals are consistent with the MIRWMP by reviewing MIRWMP strategies and integrating applicable tools, policies and strategies into the BCCP.

2. Promote Public Health

The "Urban Village" design envisioned for the Bellevue Corridor will lay the groundwork for a thriving, interactive community including quality affordable housing, schools, libraries, green space, recreational facilities, child care, financial services, health care and farmers markets. The natural result of a well balanced community is a robust economy, supportive neighbors, and a clean environment. This holistic approach to public health has been proven to reduce crime and disease for all age groups, resulting in a "healthy community," as described by the Department of Public Health.

To achieve this goal, the City will work with Merced County Department of Public Health, identifying local health risks and their long-term solutions. Staff will request input from health-related community groups to brainstorm strategies that will result in a comprehensive planning document to pave the way to a higher quality of life for Merced's residents.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research estimates that 67% of Merced County adults are overweight or obese (ranking Merced County second in the State for obesity prevalence). Physical activity is a crucial element of public efforts to reduce obesity and the chronic health problems associated with obesity (e.g. diabetes). The BCCP would map out the area's first public park space and recreational facilities, encouraging physical activity. The Complete Streets design will encourage travel by walking and cycling.

This Complete Streets approach to transportation will result in cleaner air, reducing the incidence of asthma for residents of the Bellevue Corridor. Asthma now affects 20% of Merced's children. A strong case for the impact of City Planning in reducing asthma attacks comes from a study of Atlanta during the 1996 Summer Olympics. To reduce traffic congestion downtown during the 17 days the games were being held, the city enhanced public transit, closed downtown to private cars and encouraged businesses to promote telecommuting and alternative work hours. The study found that daily peak ozone levels dropped 28% and hospitalizations for asthma fell by almost 20% during that time.

To evaluate the Plan's health impacts, the City will examine health data collected by the Merced County Public Health Department. Indicators such as local school's physical fitness testing results, incidence of asthma emergencies, employment and crime rates will speak to the area's overall physical, emotional, social and mental health.

3. Promote Equity

The City of Merced is a "severely disadvantaged" community, hindered by acute poverty and high unemployment. The growth of UC Merced has great potential to improve quality of life for this population. The BCCP will guide the economic growth adjacent to the university, striving for job creation suited for a variety of skill sets. Housing options will be diverse to fit budgets from all income levels, and public transportation will be designed for convenience and efficiency.

The creation of public green space will be particularly valuable to this underserved population. According to a 2005 study conducted by UCLA's Center for Health Policy Research, which compared

ethnic groups' access to public parks, Hispanic and Latino children were 11 times less likely than non-Hispanic/Latino whites to have access to public parks. Children of Asian descent were 14 times less likely. As Latino and Asian residents comprise 53% of Merced's population, this project will benefit many of California's overlooked families.

The City of Merced has a proud history of engaging economically and socially underserved populations in its planning processes. Historically these stakeholders have included: NAACP, Hmong Community, Merced Lao Family Community, Hispanic Network, Area Agency on Aging, Merced/Mariposa County Asthma Coalition, Healthy Communities Access Program, Merced County Farm Bureau, Boys and Girls Club, Merced Alliance for Responsible Growth, Merced Bike Coalition, the Community Partnership Alliance, neighborhood groups, and several faith-based organizations such as the Salvation Army.

In order to include underrepresented communities, many methods will be practiced, including: (a) specific project presentations to underrepresented communities at their meeting locations; (b) press releases placed in the bulletins, newsletters or other communication tools utilized by underrepresented communities; (c) special VIP invitations to these communities to attend and participate in the outreach efforts; and (d) as appropriate, translation services at public meetings.

The City will determine its success in these areas by examining the following indicators: unemployment rates, number of jobs created, entrepreneurial endeavors, median income, transit ridership, housing markets and park acreage per 1,000 residents.

For calculations regarding the City's "severely disadvantaged community" status (based on 2008 US Census Bureau data), please see pages 22-24.

4. Increase Housing Affordability

While the area will certainly attract many high-income, skilled professionals, the City recognizes that a large percentage of the residents of this area will be university students. This necessitates the provision of affordable housing. The mixed-use Urban Village design intended for the Bellevue Corridor will be highly conducive to creating housing options for people with limited income. With the university population growing tenfold in the next 10 years, current housing density will need drastic revisions. The project will allow the City to increase the Corridor's housing supply and diversify housing types, tenure, and affordability. The end result will be affordable, high quality, socially integrated and location-efficient housing.

By converting the City's vision of compact, mixed-use urban design to code, the City will blend commercial and residential areas. This efficient development pattern will create a healthy relationship between housing and job availability.

Merced County Association of Governments has published its Regional Housing Need Plan (RHNP) and will advise the City of concepts outlined within the document, including affordability standards. Working with Merced's many community groups, the City will establish and prioritize a list of housing needs for the future residents of the Bellevue Corridor.

The primary indicator for housing affordability will be the ratio of median income to median housing costs. The City may also track housing inventory and vacancy rates.

5. Promote Infill and Compact Development

As the UC population grows from 3,500 students and staff to a population exceeding 35,000, the area will see ongoing new construction. Growth will need to expand westward, away from conservation easements and toward the city. Bellevue Road stretches across three miles of grazing land and links the UC with the City of Merced. By filling the three-mile gap between Merced and the university, the City

will anchor population growth to an area with established infrastructure including sewer and water service, adjacent schools and nearby emergency services.

The proposed project will convert the city's urban design guidelines (based on Peter Calthorpe's vision of transit-oriented development) to zoning code. Mixed-use zoning will blend residential and commercial areas, creating an Urban Village layout with a town center. High density housing will mix with parks, offices, shops, services and transit options to create a well-balanced, walkable community.

The City will measure its success by the area's minimum lot size and number of homes per acre. The City will also consider the number of housing units and businesses within a half-mile of transit.

6. Revitalize Urban and Community Centers

The area's current zoning is agricultural-residential, with no focal point or public facilities. When implemented, the BCCP will lay out a compact community, oriented around an attractive retail and office center integrated with open space.

To assess the Plan's effectiveness, the City will measure the number of occupied offices, homes, shops and service centers within a mile radius of the community's main hub.

7. Protect Natural Resources and Agricultural Land

For a description of the City's environmental protection and preservation strategies, including compact design, please see Threshold Requirements Section 1. b. (page 2).

Indicators of successful compact design will include a reduced minimum lot size and increased number of homes per acre.

The project will be consistent with the California Wildlife Action Plan in that the policies included in the plan will aim to preserve, protect, and/or mitigate the loss of resources, promote the long-term sustainability and vitality of natural resources within the larger regional context. The City will aim to integrate natural resources into development, promoting the use of drought-tolerant native vegetation for landscaping purposes and connecting open spaces to allow the presence of wildlife within the Bellevue Corridor.

Indicators of this integration will include the acreage of connected open space and the numbers of native plant species integrated into public landscaping.

Please note: No Natural Community Conservation Plan exists for this area. This project will not include the mining of minerals or any activities related to the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.

8. Reduce Automobile Use and Fuel Consumption

As discussed, the project will create a strategy for transit-oriented development in an area with a soaring population. This walkable community will feature compact design and an Urban Village layout with mixed commercial, residential and recreational use, cutting the need for single-occupant vehicular travel.

A convenient and affordable transit system will lace through the area and link to several bus lines leading riders to University bus stops, Merced destinations, Greyhound and beyond. To accommodate the varying needs of students and other residents, local transit lines will operate most hours of the day.

The addition of lighted, tree-lined, off-street bike paths – plus bike racks and other amenities -- will encourage cycling as a feasible and attractive mode of transportation. These bike paths will link to the City's award-winning network of paved recreational trails, which weave through most parts of Merced and will eventually merge with a large, regional system.

This project is highly coordinated with the transportation and bicycle plans produced by Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG). Since the MPO is an integral partner in this project, the Plan will be carefully crafted for consistency with the goals, policies, and strategies set forth in the 2025 California Transportation Plan. MCAG will advise the City in regard to the State's vision for mobility, accessibility, capacity and other issues.

9. Improve Infrastructure Systems

The BCCP's infrastructure guidelines will expand and improve upon the area's current infrastructure. The Plan will lay out goals and policies for accessible, efficient transportation systems; a solid waste program characterized by source reduction and modern recycling components; sustainable energy infrastructure; and integrated water-related infrastructure that addresses potable water, wastewater, and storm water concerns.

Indicators will include water meters, recycling program participation, transit ridership, and ratio of energy generated to energy consumed.

10. Promote Water Conservation

Population growth and potential climate change are contributing to an impending mismatch between available water resources and demand. The City will work with experts from Merced Irrigation District, and Merced Area Groundwater Pool Interest (MAGPI), as well as researchers from UC Merced to find solutions by studying groundwater, surface water and climate data.

Consistent with the State Water Plan, many strategies will be discussed to help the State achieve its goal of reducing water consumption 20 percent by 2020. The BCCP will discuss multi-objective storm water projects, including construction of permeable surfaces and collection basins and barriers. Consumption of potable water will be minimized through the innovative use of recycled wastewater and storm water, in keeping with the goals of the Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

Water conservation indicators will include reduced residential and commercial water consumption.

11. Promote Energy Efficiency and Conservation

A conservation-oriented energy supply will be encouraged through building-related conservation techniques. By balancing the area's electricity supply from local energy production and the grid, the City will allow for a reliable, efficient energy program. The Plan will promote renewable energy sources such as solar panels and geothermal designs.

Results of the City's energy efficiency and conservation efforts will be indicated by below-average residential and commercial energy consumption.

12. Strengthen the Economy

The presence of UC Merced will greatly influence the City's goals for the Bellevue Corridor's economic development. Working with the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and dozens of stakeholders, the City will establish objectives to maximize the economic vitality of this area.

Work will include investigation of the area's potential to attract research-based companies and large corporations that provide significant employment opportunities with competitive salaries and benefit packages, as well as the appropriate amounts and mixes of commercial and residential uses. Special attention will be given to secure a diverse set of businesses that cater to the University population, including entertainment options, retail stores and student-oriented services.

Indicators of a thriving economy will include low unemployment and increased sales tax revenue.

Step 3: Priority Considerations

1. Proposal ensures ongoing collaboration with multiple public and private sectors and stakeholders and interest, and involves the community in the planning process (include in work plan).

a. Describe tasks undertaken by all entities involved in the work plan.

The project will begin with the City's formation of a Citizen-based Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC will be comprised of volunteers from existing City committees whose focus will be land use planning, economic development, bicycle planning, community services, and site and building design. One member from each City committee will sit on the Bellevue Corridor CAC during the term of the Project to work with Planning Staff to advise City Staff in their preparation of the BCCP.

The City's next major task will be its Public Outreach Kick-off meeting. This will set the stage for several public workshops, which will span over the course of a year. During this time, the City will conduct research and compile project studies.

In the weeks that follow, the CAC will play a crucial role in garnering public support for the Plan. Such participation will ensure a wide knowledge and understanding of the purpose of the plan, as well as the ability to carry the plan through implementation actions.

Public support efforts will lead to the City Council's adoption of the Plan, followed by the adoption of Urban Village form based code.

Finally the City will work with CALAPA and other Central Valley Planners to disseminate BCCP concepts to agencies throughout California.

b. Describe how other entities will be engaged in the development and/or implementation of the Proposal (e.g., local governments, state entities, COGs, MPOs, transit agencies, health agencies, air districts, local businesses, landowners, general public, environmental groups, low income households and/ or groups that represent them, etc).

The City's partners in the project, Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) and UC Merced, will be very engaged in the project. MCAG will counsel City Staff regarding Federal, State and Regional regulations. UC Merced staff, faculty and students will inform many sections of the plan, encouraging compatibility with the sustainability vision of the University and ensuring a seamless blend of campus and off-campus environments.

This project will be driven by the active participation of several additional groups. Three general categories of stakeholders exist for this project: government agencies; community based organizations and underrepresented groups; and commercial interests.

Government agencies: As with all planning efforts, there is a standing group of "stakeholder" governmental agencies that will be involved. Notable agencies include Caltrans, Merced County Department of Public Health, Merced Irrigation District, Merced Area Groundwater Pool Interest Group, Valley Air District and three key divisions of the City that will help implement the plan, including the City of Merced Engineering Department, the Merced Parks and Community Services Department, and the Public Works Division. These entities will provide data and guidance in navigating the issues that their offices address on a day-to-day basis. State and Regional entities will provide direction to ensure the BCCP's compliance with State and Regional plans.

Community-based organizations and underrepresented groups: Future development of the area will provide housing and employment opportunities to the City's diverse populations. Their participation, voice, and stake in the future growth of this area is a key component of the Project. For a partial list of these stakeholders, please see Program Objectives Section 3, regarding equity (p. 6-7).

Commercial Interests: Although there are no businesses currently within the Project boundary, there are important existing and future businesses of note that have strong interests and roles in the outcome and implementation of the Plan. Existing businesses include private community development whose interests are represented by the Building Industry Association of Merced County and Merced Economic Development and Redevelopment. Much of the land owned within the Project area is held by independent private land developers. Long-term interests include the local chambers of commerce and regional interests that would like to see opportunities for large scale employment centers in research-based industrial parks as spin-off development located adjacent to UC Merced.

c. Describe how the community will be engaged in the planning process.

Community participation will be crucial to ensure wide local ownership of the planning process, which will be predominantly “bottom up” rather than “top down.” The community will have opportunity to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities through a series of public hearings, workshops and meetings.

The City will use the following methods to foster stakeholder participation: host a community-based information and orientation open house; conduct one-on-one stakeholder interviews; heavily advertise and facilitate workshops; circulate drafts and options of the elements of the Plan; and hold public committee meetings to finalize the Plan’s language and implementation actions.

At community meetings, residents and organizations will establish a long-term vision for the area, outline goals, and create an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes. Written input will be accepted (via the postal service and email), and the City’s contact information will be included on all flyers advertising the project.

The key to an effective community strategy will be successful community involvement throughout the process. At every stage, community members will have important roles to play.

2. Proposal demonstrates strategies or outcomes that can serve as best practices (BPS) for communities across the state.

a. Does the proposal include tools or processes that could be easily accessed and used by other government agencies to develop plans or strategies for sustainable communities?

Central Valley cities cover a broad area and struggle with many of the same issues, such as air quality, poverty and a need to diversify agriculturally based economies. Because of these commonalities, solutions to Merced’s challenges are easily transferrable to other communities in the Valley.

With this in mind, the City is proactive in distributing its planning documents to regional entities, in printed form and on the internet.

b. How will your agency promote and share the Proposal’s information, tools or processes?

Upon the BCCP’s completion, the City will actively promote the concepts addressed in the Plan. The City will notify Valley professional planning firms of the BCCP’s completion, mailing the document and directing firms to the City’s website. The City’s electronic copies will be easily accessible and allow readers to search documents for key terms pertinent to their research.

At local planning roundtable presentations (such as the Valley’s Future Forum, held at the Great Valley Center in Modesto), other communities will be invited to make use of the City’s research and planning concepts. The City will also submit the finished Plan for local and state planning awards to further promote sustainable community techniques. As the Plan reaches implementation, success indicators will be tracked and published as well.

3. Proposal is leveraged with additional resources, in-kind or funds. Identify in Appendix L, Budget.

a. Identify funding sources and amount already committed to the proposal and expected timing of funds. Detail whether funds are in the form of cash contributions, in-kind services, volunteer effort, donated labor or materials, technical expertise, etc.

The City Council has committed to providing a 15% local match (equaling \$44,345), plus an additional \$75,000 from private sources to cover the project's associated vital Economic Study to assure a well balanced land use plan.

b. Identify potential future funding sources and the amount expected to be committed to the proposal. Detail whether funds are in the form of cash contributions, in-kind services, volunteer effort, donated labor or materials, technical expertise, etc.

The City commits to cover 15% of project expenses, funded by cash and in-kind contributions. The City also commits to cover the additional \$75,000 cost of the Economic Study, though this cost will be covered by private contributions. In the unlikely event that no other contributions are secured, the City is prepared to cover the costs, as reflected in the budget's "cash match" column.

4. Proposal Addresses Climate Change Impacts.

a. Identify the potential climate change impacts on the population, on human or natural areas, or systems most vulnerable to those impacts within the planning area.

Global climate change will modify long-term weather patterns in Central California with direct consequences to air quality and public health. The City is currently developing its first Climate Action Plan. The principles outlined in Merced's Climate Change Action Plan will be carefully integrated into the BCCP, with the City's Principal Planner overseeing both projects.

Merced consistently ranks among the nation's worst metropolitan areas for air quality. As the global climate changes, land-sea temperature contrasts will effect wind speed and cause further complications for Merced's high population of asthmatics and allergy sufferers.

Water supply has always been a concern for cities in the Central Valley, and experts expect that climate change will further reduce the region's access to water. This will have immediate consequences for supplying water to households and businesses in the Bellevue Corridor. The community will also be impacted as agricultural businesses struggle and the overall ecosystem suffers. Temperature changes are expected to have direct impacts on energy production, use and distribution and on transportation infrastructure.

b. How does the proposal improve adaptation to the impacts for these populations, human or natural areas, or systems?

In an effort to slow climate change, the City will be moving forward with some of the Valley's most innovative approaches to high quality, low impact development. The BCCP process will consider "reach" design guidelines for homes and commercial buildings to go beyond the minimum Green Building Standards Code, as well as solar design guidelines for development to benefit from the State's "Million Solar Roofs" program.

To address impacts of inevitable climate change consequences, the BCCP will include "Urban Water Runoff Reuse" strategies, policies and incentives to increase local water supplies by maximizing the infiltration and/or capture of storm water through non-traditional, low-impact approaches.

The City will have completed a "Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)," including a chapter on Climate Change Adoption, in June of 2011, enabling the BCCP to be part of implementing mitigation of said LHMP.

5. Proposal serves an economically disadvantaged community.

a. How will this proposal specifically benefit a disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged community?

This proposal will benefit residents of the City of Merced. Merced meets the SGC's definition of a "severely disadvantaged community," as the median household income (\$36,064) is less than 60% of California's median household income. (Please see page 22 for calculations based on the US Census Bureau's most recent American Community Survey.)

The 2008 American Community Survey indicates that over 26% of Merced's population (and 35% of children) live in poverty. As of June 2010, Merced County's unemployment rate was 18.1%, ranking the fourth highest of the State's 58 counties (Employment Development Department).

While residents of many economic backgrounds will interact within the limits of the Bellevue Corridor, the plan will most directly benefit the area's educational community. The Bellevue Corridor is adjacent to UC Merced, which, when fully developed, will serve 25,000 students. In 2007, the Federal government classified 42% of UC Merced students as "low income" based on parents' income levels. (This percentage is by far the highest of all schools in the UC system.) The UC estimates the average student income (from part-time work) to be \$2,400 per year. Graduates finish with an average of \$15,000 in student loan debt.

The project will lay the plans to develop a high quality community for many low-income residents. Plans will allow for a variety of housing options, public parks and a public transportation system. The BCCP will introduce businesses into the area, providing services and employment to a community with a struggling economy.

b. Discuss how the economically disadvantaged community has been and will continue to be engaged and participatory in the development of the proposal.

As with the development of Merced's other Community Plans, City Staff will ensure that economically disadvantaged community members are encouraged to attend project-related meetings by advertising meetings in a variety of locations. Special measures will be taken to ensure that low-income participants have easy access to meeting sites (for instance, meetings will be held in areas that have public transportation services), and meeting days and times will vary, to accommodate the diverse work and family schedules of community members.

For further explanation of stakeholder outreach and participation, please see Priority Considerations Section 1.c. (regarding community engagement) and Program Objectives Section 3 (regarding equity).

Step 4: Organizational Capacity

Answer the following questions:

1. What is your organization's experience in completing this type of Proposal or similar Proposals? Is the expertise needed for the successful development of the Proposal available within the organization? If not, how do you plan to acquire it?

All staff members have extensive experience in public outreach, organizing committees and facilitating discussions. All are well versed in the planning process and capable of creating a thorough, polished product. Additionally, the Planning Department's support staff has prior experience with and will assist with document production and grant-related management activities such as submitting quarterly reports and requests for reimbursement. The City Planning Department has successfully utilized student interns to help craft similar planning documents, including the Climate Action Plan, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Highway 59 Revitalization Plan.

The City's Planning Department has worked with professional planning consultants on a wide array of projects, and in-house planning staff will quickly prepare an RFP, conduct interviews, prepare contracts and seek Council action in a timely manner.

The City employs several staff members with experience in similar plans. For a list of related projects, please see the work experience attachment on page 30.

2. Do you have active partners that will help develop the Proposal? How?

Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) is a committed partner in this Plan. As the MPO, MCAG will offer guidance to the City's planning efforts to encourage the Plan's consistency with the San Joaquin Valley Regional Blueprint and its future Regional Transportation Plan, including the Sustainable Community Strategy, as required by SB 375.

The University of California-Merced is also engaged in the BCCP process. The UC Department of Physical Planning, Design and Construction has offered to assist with design concepts to extend the campus' "green" environment to the outlying neighborhoods. As America's first research university of the 21st Century, UC Merced has rooted much of its identity in its commitment to sustainability, calling itself "a living laboratory, piloting sustainability for growing communities." The UC's Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) was named the Outstanding Planning Document of 2009 by the Association of Environmental Professionals. The campus' LRDP requires all new buildings to be LEED Gold certified or better. Other ambitions include the "Triple Zero Commitment" to produce as much energy as is used, eliminate landfill waste and produce zero net greenhouse gas emissions, all by 2020. Since the Bellevue Corridor will act as the gateway to campus, campus planners are eager to contribute their expertise in design and GHG reduction tools and techniques to the BCCP.

3. How will the Proposal be kept on schedule and within budget?

Using "Microsoft Project," the Project Manager will be able to observe the entirety of the Project time and financial budget, as well as make detailed assignments to project staff resources. The Project Manager will create teams of City Staff and assign specific duties suited to the skill level of each staff member. City Staff has also crafted Excel spreadsheets to ascertain the exact number of hours, on a daily basis over the life of the Project, it takes for the City Project Team to budget to complete the work on time and on budget. There is no guesswork.

Weekly meetings between the Project Manager and his team to assess productivity, assign new tasks, and resolve operational challenges, will help ensure that the project stays on-track. This information will be compared to the project schedule and adjustments will be made weekly.

Prior planning projects of this magnitude have given the Planning Staff an opportunity to create a suite of budget documents that make it simple for staff to accurately record activities and time spent on tasks in a daily format. This includes a fully integrated Excel spreadsheet and alphanumeric codes that both streamline work and enable accurate and comprehensive recording of activities.

Consultant related tasks will be covered in professional service contracts and the work will be similarly assessed by both public and private project managers.

4. If the Proposal goes over budget, explain your contingency plan to cover the cost.

In the unlikely event that costs should increase over the course of the project or that products are not produced in the budgeted time, the City will use monies from the General Fund to supplement the BCCP budget.